

IN THE CLAIMS: Please amend Claims 4 and 5 as shown below. All of the remaining claims are reproduced below for the convenience of the Examiner. The amended claims with underlining and brackets are also included as an attachment hereto.

4. (Twice amended) A method of installing an integral sealing gasket within a gasket receiving groove located in a bell connection of a joint of polyethylene pipe, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a rotatably driven mandrel having a substantially cylindrical end section corresponding to the internal diameter of a bell connection to be formed, the mandrel having an outer extent and an inner extent, the mandrel having a locating area for an elastomeric gasket on an external surface thereof;

positioning an elastomeric gasket on the external surface of the mandrel at the locating area thereof, the locating area being between the inner and outer extents of the mandrel;

forming a bell connection about the mandrel and suitably located gasket by extruding a melt profile made of polyethylene onto the mandrel beginning adjacent the inner extent of the mandrel and spirally winding the melt profile around the cylindrical end section of the mandrel and around the gasket such that adjacent windings of the melt profile make contact;

cooling the bell connection thus formed;

removing the bell connection and gasket from the mandrel;

whereby a pre-stressed and pre-located integral gasket is provided within the bell connection which is securely retained within the gasket receiving groove, the bell connection being integrally formed about the gasket during manufacture.

5. (Twice amended) A method of installing an integral sealing gasket within a gasket receiving groove located in a bell connection of a joint of polyethylene pipe, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a rotatably driven mandrel having a substantially cylindrical end section corresponding to the internal diameter of a bell connection to be formed, the mandrel having an outer extent and

an inner extent, the mandrel having a locating area for an elastomeric gasket on an external surface thereof;

positioning an elastomeric gasket on the external surface of the mandrel at the locating area thereof, the locating area being between the inner and outer extents of the mandrel;

forming a bell connection about the mandrel and suitably located gasket by extruding a melt profile made of polyethylene onto the mandrel beginning adjacent the inner extent of the mandrel and spirally winding the melt profile around the cylindrical end section of the mandrel and around the gasket such that adjacent windings of the melt profile make contact;

terminating the extruding step while continuing to rotate the mandrel;

spraying cooling water over the bell end connection thus formed;

cutting a free end of the connection with a rotating knife;and

removing the bell end connection and integral gasket from the mandrel;

whereby a pre-stressed and pre-located integral gasket is provided within the bell connection which is securely retained within the gasket receiving groove, the bell connection being integrally formed about the gasket during manufacture.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein the mandrel is heated to at least about 100 degrees C. before the melt profile is extruded.

8. The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of subjecting the extruded melt profile to a weak mechanical loading by means of a rotating roll for intensifying a welding-together of the contacting melt profile windings.

9. (Once amended) The method of claim 5, wherein the rotating knife comprises a freely rotating circular blade which is pressed against the polyethylene of the bell end connection for cutting the free end of the connection.

10. The method of claim 5, further comprising the steps of:

removing the bell connection from the mandrel by blowing pressurized air between the mandrel and the connection while directly pushing the connection in a direction opposite the mandrel.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising the step of:

electrowelding the thus formed bell connection onto a generally cylindrical length of thermoplastic pipe.